

Nodes of Love

Lisay sa Bagan [A Swelling in the Loins]. By Adonis Durado. Translated by Haidee Emmie Palapar and Anthony L. Kintanar. Cebu City: Far Left Publishing, 2016. 96 pp.

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LISAY SA BUGAN (*A Swelling in the Loins*) is Adonis Durado's third book of poetry. Continuing the tradition of the Cebuano *balak* (poem) and *garay* (verse), the book has fifty-one poems: the first part entitled "Lisay" (Swelling) contains twenty-five poems, while the second part entitled "Bugan" (Loins) also has twenty-five poems.

"Lisay" features poems about yearning, jealousy, and other sentiments concerning love and the affliction of "lovesickness." In "Bugan," the poems offer a range of titillations in verse, from flirtatious to the erotic.

The eponymous poem "Lisay sa Bagan" (*A Swelling in the Loins*) is a *pamaraw* that casts away bad luck brought by even numbers. The poem serves both as an appeal to the beloved and a prayer, an invocation of the poet to the spirits that will guide him into a realm of words and the readers into a body afflicted with maladies. In her preface to the collection, Marjorie Evasco says that "[in] Visayan healing lore, high fever accompanied by chills or convulsion can be relieved after . . . the *lisay*, the hardened lymph nodes in the heat centers of the body [is located]. . . ."

In "Panggaon unta ko nimo sama sa usa ka hilanat" (May you also love me like a fever), the speaker implores his lover to reciprocate his feelings and compares that act to remedies to different ailments. In the end, the malady of loving is treated when the speaker says, ". . . for I am your

refuge, / your one piece of blanket, / your single teaspoon of medicine."

Poems in the collection that are mostly short and do away with fixed meter and rhythms include "kusi" (pinch), "ug" (and), "siplat" (glance), "usa" (single), "Kanta sa abubhoan" (Jealous man's ballad), "soliloquy sa malditong dentist nga gaopera sa pasyenteng bigot" (soliloquy of the naughty dentist operating on voluptuous patient), "kwaresma" (lent), "haros kamunggay" (strip bare), "Unang gabii, tupad ni Penelope" (First night, lying beside Penelope), and "Tsismis" (Gossip).

There are also a number of experimental verses that employ the techniques of concrete poetry, postmodern wit, and print media in the forms of comics and posters. Durado also happens to be a visual artist and graphic designer, an occupation for which he is well-known outside of the Philippines.

One short poem entitled "suhi" (breech) is printed upside down on the page. One needs to turn the book in order to read the poem. "Palihog kog connect-the-dots, Ga" (Please connect-the-dots, Babe) encourages the reader to participate in a game on the page.

Other poems, such as "Balitaw," also invite readers to interact in a similar manner. Balitaw is a courtship song in which different personas are speaking to each other. In "Balitaw," one courts, while the other rejects.

Durado also uses current forms from communication technology. "re: musta" (re: hello) takes on the e-mail format, while "usa ka dosenang tweet ni mister sa wap-a reglaha si misis" (a

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dozen tweets from the mister before the missus's menstruation) is a twelve-line poem combines the micro-blogging platform of Twitter and the Japanese renga.

"Cuarteta Greguería" mimics the shape of a guitar, with each line attached to a string and flows to the next page. "Toasting instructions" is a found poem in the form an instruction for a bread toaster complimented with the poet's commentary.

"Love story" is a one-panel illustration with a play on the sound of the endearment "I love you!" "Pinungkolang berso nga duyog sa sonata ni Schubert" (Severed verse in tune with Schubert's sonata) is set on unfinished composition. "Menagerie à trois" has two kinds of translation: one is a "lexical translation" based on the actual definition of the words, while the other is a "phonetic translation" based on how the sound of words is understood.

The more risqué, hyper-masculine poems that make use of double entendre are "Kon muutog ang balak" (When a poem gets a hard on), "Tago-tago" (hide-and-seek), "Gamaoy si manoy" (manoy's having a fit), "Toasting instructions", "Haros kamunggay" (strip bare), "Ang Pilipinas usa ka dakong orgy" (The Philippines is one giant orgy), and "soliloquy sa malditong dentista nga gaopera sa pasyenteng bigot" (soliloquy of the naughty dentist operating on voluptuous patient).

There are moments when Durado's "naughtiness" and machismo push a bit too far. Evasco points out the problematic depiction of women in the poems, such as "Ang asawa ko ug sando kong karaan" (My wife and my old undershirt), "Bisong" (Pussy), "Di ko ganahag burikat nga daghag patik" (I'd rather not be with a whore who's got a lot of tattoos), and "Baboy" (Pig). These poems compare women to objects, animals, or parts of the human anatomy.

There are also poems that thrive in "homosociality": two or more men talk of women in a manner that women are stripped of redeeming qualities. These poems include "menagerie à trois" and "Dihang gainom ang metaphysician ug ang gynecologist" (When the metaphysician and the gynecologist got drunk together).

Jose Garcia Villa's modernist playfulness is particularly evident in Durado's approach in *Lisay*, as shown in the poem "()" that plays with parenthetical marks or curved brackets, and most strikingly in the collection's last poem, "Footnote to Jose Garcia Villa's The Emperor's New Sonnet."

Nevertheless *Lisay sa Bagan* is an exciting addition to modern Cebuano poetry. With another batch of cheeky and clever verses, Durado is still quite capable of igniting the mind and the senses.